

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method comprising:

5 monitoring for an occurrence of a virtual event generated by an interaction with a first virtual entity within a virtual reality environment; and  
initiating a communications function that has been associated with the virtual event upon occurrence of the  
10 virtual event;  
wherein the communications function provides for communications with a real world entity associated with the first virtual entity.

15 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event is generated by a second virtual entity interacting with the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and initiating the communications function comprises initiating a communication between real world  
20 entities associated with the first and second virtual entities upon occurrence of the virtual event.

25 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event comprises an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further wherein initiating the communications function comprises initiating a telephony session between real world entities associated with the first and second virtual entities.

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4. The method of claim 3 wherein initiating the telephony session comprises initiating telecommunications between a first telecommunications device associated with

the first virtual entity and a second telecommunications device associated with the second virtual entity.

5        5.     The method of claim 1 wherein the first virtual entity is associated with a first telecommunications device, and further wherein initiating the communications function comprises initiating a telecommunications call to the first telecommunications device.

10        6.     The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event is generated by an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further wherein initiating the communications function comprises initiating an email  
15     message from a computer system associated with the second virtual entity to a computer system associated with the first virtual entity.

20        7.     The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event is generated by an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further wherein initiating the communications function comprises initiating an  
25     electronic file transfer between a computer system associated with the second virtual entity and a computer system associated with the first virtual entity.

30        8.     The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event is generated by an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further wherein initiating the communications function comprises pushing a  
representation of a graphical environment at a computer

system associated with the second virtual entity to a computer system associated with the first virtual entity.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

5 defining a plurality of events that can be generated by a plurality of different interactions between the first and second virtual entities;

associating respective ones of the plurality of events with respective ones of a plurality of  
10 communication functions;

identifying a specific one of the plurality of events upon occurrence of one of the plurality of events;

selecting a corresponding one of the plurality of communication functions from among the plurality of  
15 communication functions based on the specific one of the plurality of events; and

initiating the corresponding one of the plurality of communication functions.

20 10. The method of claim 1 further comprising:

defining at least one additional communications function associated with the virtual event;

defining a criteria for determining whether to initiate the communications function or the additional  
25 communications function;

evaluating the criteria upon occurrence of the event; and

initiating one of the communications function and the additional communications function based on the  
30 evaluation of the criteria.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the criteria is a known location of a user associated with the first virtual entity.

12. The method of claim 10 wherein the virtual event is generated by an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further wherein the criteria is a known location of a user associated with the second virtual entity.

13. The method of claim 10 wherein the criteria is a time of day.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein the virtual event is generated by an interaction between a second virtual entity and the first virtual entity within the virtual reality environment, and further comprising:

initiating a telephony session between a first user associated with the first virtual entity and a second user associated with the second virtual entity using a first contact number for the first user during a first period of time; and

initiating a telephony session between the first user associated with the first virtual entity and the second user associated with the second virtual entity using a second contact number for the first user during a second period of time.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein initiating the communications functions comprises one in a group of actions consisting of initiating a telephony session, initiating a computer application, initiating an email transmission, initiating an electronic file transfer, initiating an electronic conference, initiating an electronic data sharing session, and initiating a virtual environment working session.

16. A method comprising:

representing a real world entity as at least one virtual entity within a virtual environment; and

5 associating at least one communications function relevant to the real world entity with a defined virtual event that can be generated by interacting with the at least one virtual entity.

10 17. The method of claim 16 further comprising: monitoring for an occurrence of the defined virtual event; and

initiating the at least one communications function upon occurrence of the defined virtual event.

15 18. The method of claim 16 wherein the defined virtual event is generated by an interaction between the at least one virtual entity and an additional virtual entity associated with another real world entity, and  
20 initiating the communications function comprises initiating a communication between the real world entity associated with the at least one virtual entity and the real world entity associated with the additional virtual entity upon occurrence of the defined virtual event.

25 19. The method of claim 16 wherein associating at least one communications function relevant to the real world entity with a defined virtual event that can be generated by interacting with the at least one virtual  
30 entity comprises:

associating a plurality of communications functions relevant to the real world entity with the defined virtual event; and

defining at least one criteria for selecting a preferred communications function from the plurality of communications functions.

5           20. The method of claim 19 further comprising:  
evaluating the at least one criteria upon occurrence  
of the defined virtual event to determine the preferred  
communications function; and  
initiating the preferred communications function.

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21. The method of claim 20 wherein initiating the  
at least one communications functions comprises  
initiating at least one in a group of actions consisting  
of initiating a telephony session, initiating a computer  
15 application, initiating an email transmission, initiating  
an electronic file transfer, initiating an electronic  
conference, initiating an electronic data sharing  
session, and initiating a virtual environment working  
session.

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22. The method of claim 16 further comprising:  
associating respective ones of a plurality of  
communications functions relevant to the real world  
entity with corresponding ones of a plurality of defined  
25 virtual events that can be generated by different  
interactions with the at least one virtual entity;

selecting a corresponding one of the plurality of  
communications functions upon occurrence of a given one  
of the plurality of defined virtual events; and

30           initiating the corresponding one of the plurality of  
communications functions.

23. The method of claim 16 wherein representing a  
real world entity as at least one virtual entity within a

virtual environment comprises representing the real world entity with a plurality of virtual entities, and further wherein associating at least one communications function relevant to the real world entity with a defined virtual event that can be generated by interacting with the at least one virtual entity comprises associating respective ones of a plurality of communications functions with respective ones of the plurality of virtual entities.

10           24. A method comprising:  
              associating a virtual entity in a virtual reality environment with a person;  
              linking a virtual event defined for the virtual entity with a desired communications function relevant to  
15           the person;  
              monitoring for an occurrence of the virtual event;  
              and  
              initiating the desired communications function upon occurrence of the virtual event.

20           25. The method of claim 24 further comprising:  
              linking the virtual event defined for the virtual entity with a plurality of communications functions;  
              defining at least one criteria for selecting a  
25           preferred one of the plurality of communications functions at a given time;  
              evaluating the at least one criteria upon occurrence of the virtual event to determine the preferred communications function; and  
30           initiating the preferred communications function.

              26. A computer readable media comprising software for instructing a computer to:

monitor for an event notification signifying an event occurring within a virtual reality environment; associate the event notification with a desired communications function; and

5       initiate the desired communications function upon occurrence of the event notification,

          wherein the communications function provides for communications with a real world entity associated with virtual entity represented in the virtual reality  
10       environment.

27. The computer readable media of claim 26 wherein the instructions to monitor for the event notification include monitoring for the occurrence of the event  
15       generated by an interaction between a first virtual entity and a second virtual entity, and the instructions to initiate the communications function include initiating a communication between real world entities associated with the first and second virtual entities  
20       upon occurrence of the event notification.

28. The computer readable media of claim 26 for further instructing the computer to:

          process event data received as part of the event  
25       notification;

          determine information bearing on execution of the desired communications function from the event data;

          configure initiation information using the information bearing on the execution of the desired  
30       communications function; and

          initiate the desired communications function using the initiating information.



29. The computer readable media of claim 26 for further instructing the computer to:

process the event notification to identify an occurrence of a certain event within the virtual reality environment;

select one from a plurality of desired communications function based on identifying the occurrence of the certain event; and

initiate the one desired communications function selected from the plurality of desired communications functions.

30. The computer readable media of claim 26 for further instructing the computer to:

process the event notification to identify a specific event;

determine a specific desired communications function corresponding to the specific event; and

initiate the specific desired communications function.

31. The computer readable media of claim 26 for further instructing the computer to:

determine a status condition associated with the desired communications function upon receipt of the event notification; and

modify the desired communications function based on the status condition.

32. The computer readable media of claim 31 wherein said instruction to determine the status condition comprises determining a system time.

33. The computer readable media of claim 32 wherein said instruction to modify the desired communications function based on the status condition comprises initiating the desired communications function using  
5 different initiation information for different times.

34. The computer readable media of claim 32 wherein said instruction to modify the desired communications function based on the status condition comprises  
10 initiating the desired communications function on a different one of a number of associated communications systems at different times.

35. A computer readable media comprising software  
15 for instructing a computer system to:

interface with a virtual reality environment to receive event notifications generated by events within a virtual reality environment;

20 associate a particular one of the event notifications with a particular communications function; and

initiate the particular communications function upon receipt of the particular one of the event notifications.

25 36. The computer readable media of claim 35 for further instructing the computer system to:

associate the particular one of the event notifications with a plurality of communications functions;

30 determine a preferred one of the plurality of communications functions upon occurrence of the particular one of the event notifications based on evaluating at least one defined criteria; and

initiating the preferred one of the plurality of communications function.

37. The computer readable media of claim 36 for  
5 further instructing the computer system to receive information from a user identifying the plurality of communications functions.

38. The computer readable media of claim 36 for  
10 further instructing the computer system to receive information from a user bearing on the evaluation of the at least one criteria to determine the preferred one of the plurality of communications functions.

39. The computer readable media of claim 35 for  
15 further instructing the computer system to:

receive configuration information from a user associated with the particular one of the event notifications; and

20 configure the particular communications function based on the configuration information.

40. The computer readable media of claim 35 for  
25 further instructing the computer system to select one of a plurality of communications functions as the particular communications function based on a configuration value upon occurrence of the particular one of the event notifications.

30 41. The computer readable media of claim 40 for further instructing the computer system to receive information determining the configuration value from a user associated with the particular one of the event notifications.

42. A virtual reality interface system comprising:  
a first communications interface adapted to receive  
an event notification from a virtual reality system;

5 a processing system adapted to determine a desired  
communications function based on the event notification;  
and

a second communications interface adapted to provide  
initiating information sufficient to initiate the desired  
10 communications function.

43. The system of claim 42 wherein the first  
communications interface comprises a network  
communications interface adapted to transfer information  
15 between a virtual reality system server and said virtual  
reality interface system.

44. The system of claim 42 wherein said second  
communications interface comprises a network  
20 communications interface adapted to transfer the  
information sufficient to initiate the desired  
communications function between said virtual reality  
interface system and at least one networked computer  
system associated with the desired communications  
25 function.

45. The system of claim 42 wherein said virtual  
reality interface system hosts virtual reality  
environment software, and further wherein said first  
30 interface comprises a software interface with the virtual  
reality environment software.

46. The system of claim 42 wherein the desired  
communications function is a computer telephony function,

and further wherein said second communications interface is adapted to communicate with a computer telephony system.

5           47. A system comprising:

means for monitoring for an occurrence of a virtual event generated by an interaction with a first virtual entity within a virtual reality environment; and

10           means for initiating a communications function that has been associated with the virtual event involving the first virtual entity upon occurrence of the virtual event,

15           wherein the communications function provides for communications with a real world entity associated with one of the first and second virtual entities.

20           48. The system of claim 47 said means for monitoring for the occurrence of the virtual event monitors for the occurrence of the virtual event generated by an interaction between a first virtual entity and a second virtual entity, and said means for initiating the communications function initiates a communication between real world entities associated with the first and second virtual entities upon occurrence of the virtual event.

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